

Hands-On Lesson

to accompany

Curriculum Webs, 2nd edition

Weaving the Web into Teaching and Learning

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LESSON 5: Advanced Page Editing & Design

DREAMWEAVER MX 2004

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Goals for this lesson

- Understand the value of tracing images in producing complex layouts
- Use layers to create the page layout you want

HTML as it was originally designed allowed for only very simple page layouts, with text arranged more or less as it is in a traditional book, with either left, centered, or right alignment, varying font sizes, bold (or “strong”), italics, and underlining, and line spacing determined by preset paragraph styles (headings). Tables allowed somewhat more flexibility in this scheme, although page designers were still limited in where they could place texts or images on the page. So far in these Hands-On Lessons, you have learned the traditional HTML techniques.

In this lesson, you will use some of the more advanced page editing and design techniques available to create more complicated layouts, especially tracing images and layers.

Tracing Images

A tracing image is an image (GIF, JPEG, or PNG file) that serves as a guide for the placement of text and images on a web page. This allows you to use a drawing program such as Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop, Macromedia Freehand or Fireworks, or Microsoft Paint to create a “mock-up” of what your page will look like and then see that image while building your page. Tracing images are not visible in a browser; only within the web page editor.

Of courses, this is really only valuable if your page design deviates from what can easily be done in traditional HTML, that is, if your design has objects placed in positions other than rows or columns. Our example curriculum web, “Who Am I?,” found on the companion web site at <http://curriculumwebs.com> under Example Webs, uses a table to place objects on the home page, and there is no need for a tracing image to help with the layout. However, suppose you wanted a fancier design. We have created the mock-up for a fancier design so that you can learn the value of a tracing image. The design purposely does

not follow a traditional row or column format. (We're not sure we like it that much, but we do think it's better than the more traditional design of the curriculum web.)

Download the tracing image from the Resources link on the Hands-On Lessons page of <http://curriculumwebs.com>. To save it to your computer, right-click (CTRL-click on a Mac) it and choose "Save image as..." Put it on your desktop or in a folder named "Webs" in [My] Documents. Now open your web editing software and create a blank page.

Dreamweaver

- Use File | New | General | Basic | HTML to create your new blank page.
- Give the page a title by typing "Who Am I Curriculum Web (practice)" into the Title box.
- Save the file by using File | Save. Give it a name like "tracingpractice.htm."

Now, apply the tracing image.

- Use Modify | Page Properties and choose the category "Tracing Image." Browse to the tracing image file that you downloaded a few moments ago.

Notice that there is a slider allowing you to change the transparency of the tracing image. 100% is useful only if you want the tracing image to "take over" your view of the page. 50% is better if you want to easily distinguish your actual images and text from the tracing image.

- Set the transparency slider to 50% and click OK.

The tracing image will appear in the page editing window, a little bit "washed out" which is what we want. Now you can use the image as a guide to the placement of the text and images on the page.

We've supplied the text and images that you'll need for the exercise, on the Resources page under Hands-On Lessons at <http://curriculumwebs.com>. Download the images as needed and copy the text as needed. (In the actual Who Am I? curriculum web, we use a behavior to "swap" images when the user rolls the mouse over an image. You will learn this procedure in Hands-On Lesson 9. So for now, unless you're feeling like looking ahead, just use the images on the left.

You will also need to change the default page properties to match the Who am I? curriculum web template.

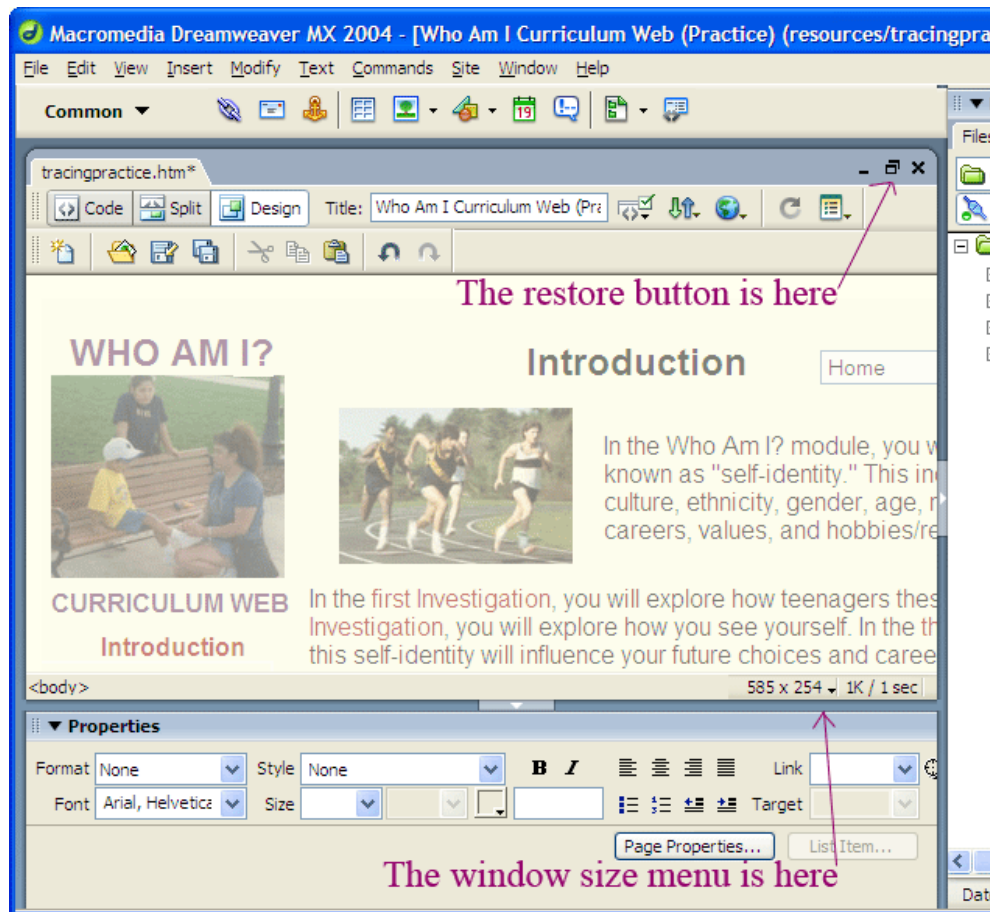
Dreamweaver

- Use Modify | Page Properties.
- Set the Page font to “Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif.”
- Leave the text color alone (the default is #000000, or black).
- Set the background color to #FFFFFF (just type this into the field).
- Click on the “Links” category on the left.
- Set the link color to #940000.
- Set the vlink color to #550000. (This is the color that visited links will appear.)
- Set the underline style to “Show underline only on rollover.”
- Click OK.

Note that the tracing image is 925 by 470 pixels. Thus, this layout assumes that the user’s screen resolution is at least 1024 by 768. Users with screen resolutions less than that will have to scroll to the right to see the entire page. If you are trying to work on this Lesson with a screen resolution of less than 1024 by 768, you will find yourself frustrated. We suggest you change your screen resolution to at least 1024 by 768, and leave it there, especially if you are going to be doing web design. Ideally, your own screen resolution will be greater than the user you are designing for; thus, a good screen resolution to design pages for a 1024 by 768 user would have a resolution of at least 1152 by 864, allowing some extra room on the designer’s screen for other panels and tools. (Of course, the larger your monitor the easier it will be to use high screen resolutions and to see more tools on your screen.)

Dreamweaver includes a number of tools to help you to design for a specific screen resolution. On a PC, normally, page editing views are maximized in Dreamweaver, using up the entire screen (except for any panels open on the right of the screen. However, you can

“restore” any page editing window by clicking the Restore button, found on the upper right hand corner of the page editing panel. This creates a “window” within a window.



On a Mac, there is no such thing as a “maximized” window because page editing windows “float” rather than being contained within the Dreamweaver application.

On both platforms, there is a “window size” menu at the lower right hand corner of the page editing window. Click the little down-arrow and you’ll see a list of preset sizes. Choosing one of these will size your page editing window so that it shows the dimensions seen by a user with specific screen resolutions. For this exercise, choose “955 x 600 (1024 x 768 maximized).” Note that on a PC this only works if you have “restored” the window using the Restore button.

(On a PC, you can also change the window size by “restoring” the main Dreamweaver window and then clicking and dragging a corner of the window until the Window size is 955 by 600. This might be easier to use, because it eliminates the “empty” space that occurs when you have a page editing window that is smaller than a maximized

window would be. It is actually pretty hard to drag the main window to the correct size, though. Try it!!)

Using Layers to place elements on the page

If you place an image or some text inside a layer, you can position it anywhere you want on the page. While not all older browsers recognize layers, very few of your users will be using these older browsers, and you can always convert your layers into tables (often a very complex set of tables, as you'll see later) so that any user can see the page the way you wanted it to be seen. (Keep in mind, however, that users with smaller screen resolutions than you have designed for will be at a big disadvantage here.)

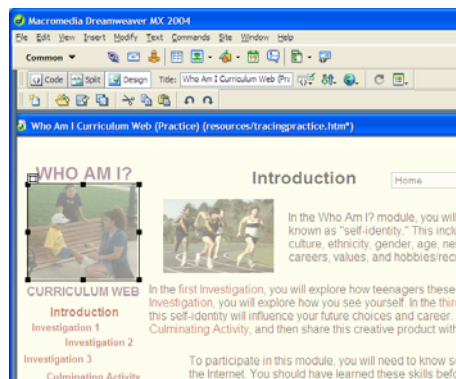
Dreamweaver

Layers are called “layout objects” in Dreamweaver.

- To insert a new layer, use Insert | Layout Objects | Layer.

Once the layer is inserted, you can move it and resize it to your heart's content. To select it, click on the little square that appears at the top left of the layer when you roll your mouse over it. You'll notice resizing handles will appear.

- Click and drag the layer so that the top left corner matches the top left corner of the first image on the page (the one with the boy on the bench with his mom tying his shoe).
- Click and drag the resize handles so that the outlines of the layer exactly match the outlines of the image.



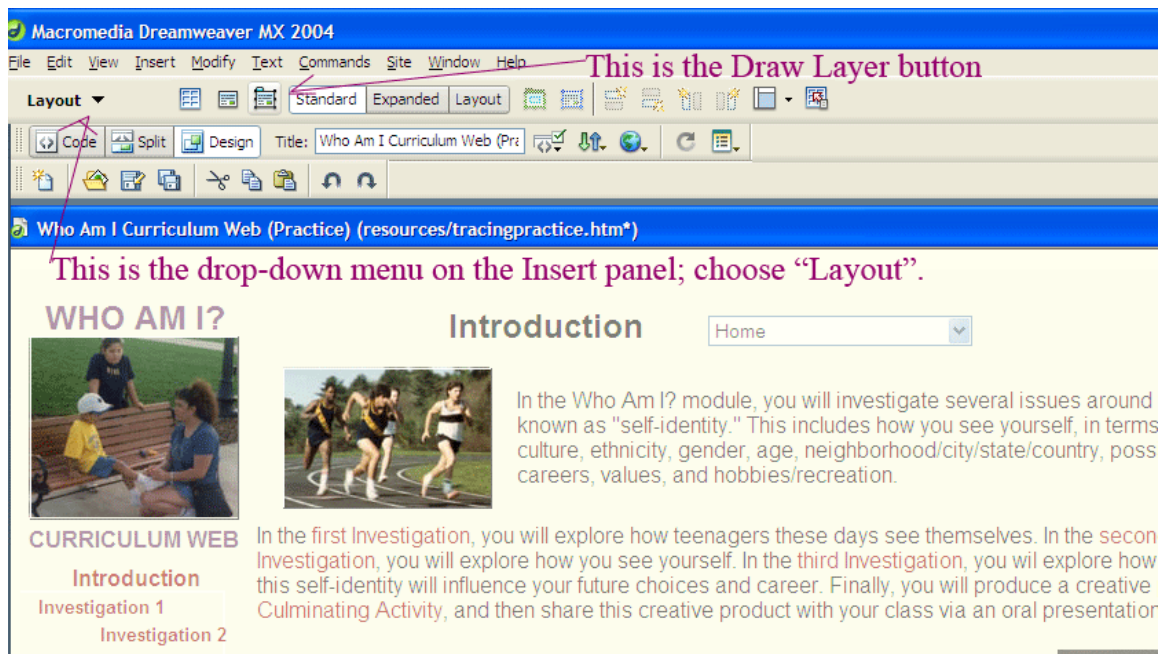
- Click inside the layer and insert the correct image by using Insert | Image and browsing to the image on your computer(whoami_image1.jpg, unless you changed the name when you downloaded it).

Notice that when you insert the image, it appears much more vibrantly than the “tracing image”. That is because we previously changed the transparency of the tracing image to 50%. This is good, because now you can see what you have accomplished.

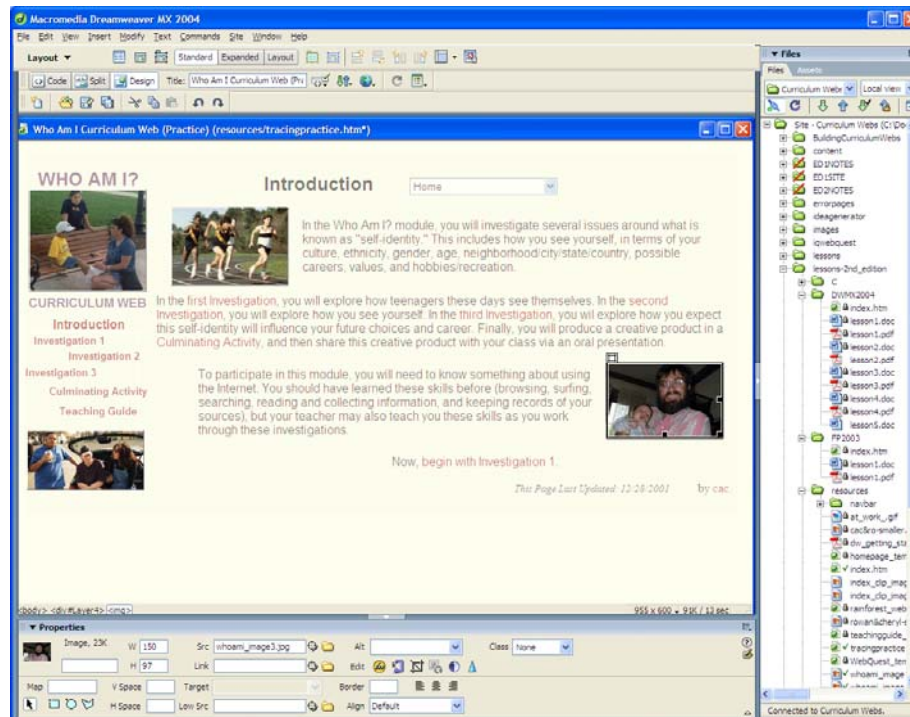
Now do the same with the other 3 images. Before you insert a new layer, though, make sure that you click outside of the layer you just created; otherwise your new layer will be created within the previous later, which is not what we want! Then, position and resize the new layer, and insert the correct image.

You can also, instead of inserting a new layer and positioning and resizing it, simply DRAW the new layer directly where you want it.

- Use the drop-down menu on the Insert panel and choose “Layout”.
- Click the button that looks like a tiny layer with the “tool tip” of “Draw Layer.”
- Simply click the top left corner of one of the images on the “tracing image” and drag to the lower right corner of the image.
- Use Insert | Image to put the correct image in the layer.



This results in something that looks like this:



- Use File | Save.
- If you want to see the result of what we've done so far, use File | Preview in Browser and choose your browser from the list.

(If you don't have any browsers listed, then you will need to add some by using Edit | Preferences | Preview in Browser and adding in your preferred browser by browsing to the Program Files or Applications section of your computer.)

You may get a message that "Active Content" has been blocked in your browser. A Javascript has been automatically inserted in your document to help Netscape version 4.0 deal with the layers. You can go ahead and allow the blocked content; it won't hurt anything!

Now it is time to position the three paragraphs of text onto the page. You do this the same as with the images, except that you will copy the text from the resources page and paste it into the layer, rather than inserting an image.

- Use the Draw layer tool to draw three separate layers for the three paragraphs. Do them one by one so you don't get confused.
- Copy the appropriate text from the Resources page for the Hands-On Lessons at <http://curriculumwebs.com>, using Ctrl-C (or Command-C on a Mac).

- Paste the text into the layer by using Ctrl-V (or Command-V on a Mac).

You will probably need to adjust the position or size of each layer after pasting the text to match exactly the text on the “tracing image.” If you forgot to change the Default text of the page to Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif you will not be able to match the tracing image at all.

- When a layer is selected (by clicking the little square above the upper left corner), you can use the arrow keys (or Shift-arrow keys) to move the layer slightly until it is in the correct position.

The layer is in the correct position when you don’t see any “shadows” on the text caused by seeing the text on the tracing image behind the “real” text in the layer.

- Create separate layers for the page Heading (Who am I? Curriculum Web) and the various links in the left-hand menu. Some of these pieces of text are “bold”, and some are 14 point text. Play with the text formatting until you get it pretty close.
- To select all of the text in a layer, click on the layer three times.)

You may not be able to match the text exactly because your version of Arial might be slightly different from the one we used to create the original page. (Note that the text that begins “This Page Last...” is in 12 point italic Georgia font face; you will have to adjust the properties of that text accordingly. The original text was laid out in a table, which is why the “by cac” is positioned to the right.)

The little drop-down menu with “Home” displayed is a “Jump Menu,” which is used as an alternative navigation device for moving among the pages in the Who Am I? curriculum web. We will show you how to make the menu in Hands-On Lesson 10. So, just ignore it for now.

You’re done!

- Use File| Save.
- Preview your creation in a browser.

Converting your Layers to Tables

If people access your layer-intensive page with an older browser, they are going to see something that is completely incomprehensible. However, you can spare these users much anguish by converting your layers to tables.

- Use **Modify | Convert | Layers to Tables**.

If you have any overlapping layers (which is possible), the process won't work. You'll get an error message such as "Layer 1 overlaps with Layer 8". How do you know what your layers are named?

- Use **Window | Layers** to see the Layers panel. Your layers are numbered consecutively, starting with the first layer you created.
- To see a particular layer, click on it in the list on the Layers panel. If one of your layers overlaps another, move or resize it slightly to avoid the overlap.
- Use **Modify | Convert | Layers to Tables** again.

What a complicated mess!! Dreamweaver creates a system of nested tables (you can see the borders of the table cells in dashed lines in the page editing window). Not all of your formatting will be preserved, so you might need to clean things up a bit. In particular, if Dreamweaver has combined any of your text formatting into styles--shown in the Style field of the Properties Panel if you press **Ctrl-Z** (**Command-Z** on a Mac) to go back to layers—these styles will disappear and your text will no longer look like the tracing image.

Aren't you glad you didn't have to construct this complicated mess of tables? Layers really do work wonders!

- Reapply any text formatting that was lost in the conversion.
- Use **File | Save As...** and save as a different file name (say, "tracingpractice_tables.htm").

Then, open both pages into (separate windows in) a browser and compare the two layouts. They should be very similar.

- If you use **File | Preview in Browser** for one of the versions, and then use **File | New Window** and open up the other version, on a PC you can use **ALT-Tab** to shift back and forth between the two windows; on a Mac, use **Command-`** (that's a backwards single quotation mark, also known as a

“tic”). Any differences in layout are made very obvious by switching back and forth.